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FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3482
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1198
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0959

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 000893

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STATE FOR NEA/ARP, LONDON FOR TSOU, PARIS FOR ZEYA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/14/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [EIND](#) [KU](#) [FREEDOM](#) [AGENDA](#) [NATIONAL](#) [ASSEMBLY](#)
SUBJECT: FREEDOM AGENDA - ELECTORAL REFORM PART III OF III:
IS THE GOVERNMENT SERIOUS ABOUT REFORM? ONE MP SAYS "NO"

REF: A. KUWAIT (PART II)
[1](#)B. KUWAIT (PART I)
[1](#)C. KUWAIT 656
[1](#)D. KUWAIT 636 AND PREVIOUS
[1](#)E. 05 KUWAIT 5186

Classified By: DCM Matt Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Despite many Government officials' public and private support for reducing the number of electoral constituencies (refs A and C), some question the Government's seriousness in supporting this key political reform. During a March 12 meeting, Issam Al-Dabbous, a Government-leaning MP who serves on the Defense and Interior Affairs Committee, which was tasked to submit a report to Parliament on electoral reform on April 17, was willing to go on record with his reservations and argued that the Government's public support for the reduction was all show. In reality, he said, the Government was already working to sink its own proposal, which is being finalized by a ministerial committee and is supposed to serve as the basis for the Defense and Interior Affairs Committee's report.

[1](#)2. (C) Al-Dabbous claimed the Government had asked Parliament's Independent Bloc, a coalition of 18 pro-Government, "service deputy" MPs, to "find an exit for the Government" and come up with a ten constituency proposal to "throw sand in the face" of those supporting the reform. According to Al-Dabbous, who is a member of the Independent Bloc, the April 17 session would play out as follows: the Independent Bloc would pass their reduction proposal "under the table" to the Government. The Government would then submit the proposal to Parliament "three days" before the April 17 session. Parliament would refer the report to the Defense and Interior Affairs Committee -- whose members all belong to the Independent Bloc -- which would "sleep on it." On April 17, the committee would complain that they were given insufficient time to review the proposal and ask for another extension. This would cause an uproar in Parliament, causing the Government to abstain from voting while blaming Parliament for further delaying the issue. After that, the issue would be effectively tabled until after the 2007 elections, Al-Dabbous concluded.

[1](#)3. (C) Al-Dabbous did see one alternative: if the Amir himself ordered the Government to submit a five constituency proposal and then actively lobbied for it, there was a chance the proposal could pass. While pessimistic about the possibility for electoral reform, Al-Dabbous believed the Government would propose ten constituencies whose division would be based on demographics: each constituency would have an equal number of voters. Under a ten constituency system, he said each voter would have five votes, and with five

constituencies, ten votes.

14. (C) Comment: Al-Dabbous, who voted against the motion to change the date for discussing the Defense and Interior Affairs Committee's report from June 30 to April 17, was very critical of the Government and specifically the Amir, who he said supported electoral reform and wanted Kuwait to be "an ideal world." His views may reflect his disappointment in the Government's support for the earlier date, which Al-Dabbous likely saw as a betrayal of loyal MPs. If the Government supports the proposal on April 17, it could demonstrate a more robust commitment to implementing reform. In addition, for someone on a committee tasked with reviewing various reduction proposals, Al-Dabbous did not seem very knowledgeable about or interested in the technical details of the different electoral systems proposed. It will be important to watch GOK actions with respect to electoral redistricting because these actions will serve as an indicator of prospects for more significant steps towards democratization. End comment.

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